



**Workload Campaign Briefing:
Member Survey Results on
Additional Support Needs**

December 2025

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eis

Scotland's largest
education trade union

Workload Campaign Briefing

Member Survey Results on Additional Support Needs

December 2025

This is the second briefing outlining key findings from the 2025 EIS Member Survey and has also drawn statistics from other EIS and Scottish Government publications. The first briefing on workload can be found on the [EIS website](#) alongside other key campaign information.

Meeting the Additional Support Needs of Scotland's Children and Young People

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004ⁱ, is the legislation which underpins additional support for learning needs (ASL) provision to support pupils identified Additional Support Needs (ASN). This includes the deployment of Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs) and specialist ASN teachers within mainstream schools, nurseries and other education settings.

Additional Support for Learning (ASL) provision has been the subject of intense scrutiny in Scotland in recent years. This scrutiny is likely to be sustained as the complexity of needs among the learning population grows, against a backdrop of under-invested public services. There is a well evidenced gap between theories of inclusion, the law on children's rights, and daily practice in our schools – a gap which stems from massive under-provision of the sources of support children require.ⁱⁱ

The EIS remains firmly committed to inclusive education, and the principle of 'presumption of mainstreaming'. We believe that education is a human right and that inclusive education, i.e. schools and classes comprising a diverse mix of learners, is the foundation of a more just society. The presumption that, when appropriate, children with additional support needs will be educated alongside their peers in their local school is sound. The serious concerns our members have voiced repeatedly are about the implementation of well-intentioned policies, i.e. the gap between promise and practice. Scotland's children, and Scotland's teachers, deserve a system where promise meets practice, not 'mainstreaming on the cheap'.

This briefing outlines the most recent evidence the EIS has gathered on the extent of under-resourcing of ASN provision in Scotland and its associated impacts on teacher workload, wider work-related wellbeing of school staff, and the wellbeing and educational experiences, and outcomes of pupils.

Stand up For Quality Education – Addressing the Shortfall in ASN Resourcing

The EIS launched its Stand Up for Quality Education (SU4QE) campaign at its AGM in June 2023. The SU4QE campaign has 3 key priority areas that were identified through our 2023 members' survey to which over 16,000 members responded:

- Build the skills, resources and school culture to address distressed, violent and aggressive pupil behaviour;
- An increase in funding and support for pupils with additional support needs (ASN); and
- A significant reduction in teacher workload.ⁱⁱⁱ

Whilst each element of the campaign has a distinct national focus, it is recognised that the themes are inter-related and cannot be considered in isolation. The campaign was launched in the national context of:

- Over a decade of austerity, coupled with high inflation, and real-terms reduction in local authority and school budgets
- Rising numbers of children with ASN – in 2023, 37% of the school population had an identified additional support need as compared to 6.5% in 2009
- Rising additional support needs as a result of the pandemic, resulting in delayed development in children, particularly in the early stages of primary and an entire generation of young people now in secondary schools who have had their personal, social and emotional development inhibited as a result of repeated lockdowns and only very weak governmental response to education recovery
- Rising need in relation to mental health issues
- Rising need related to the impact of poverty and hunger
- Reduced ratio of pupil support assistants to pupils with an ASN; i.e. number of PSAs have not risen proportionately with the number of pupils with an ASN
- Reduced numbers of ASN specialist teachers
- Large class sizes
- Decreased access to Educational Psychology services
- Decreased pupil access to Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services ('CAMHS')
- Reduced social work, youthwork and outreach teaching services
- A significant increase in incidence of violence and aggression by pupils towards teachers and pupil support assistants
- Negative impact on the mental and physical health, safety, and the general wellbeing, of teachers and school staff, the majority of whom are female
- Increased workload and pressures associated with seeking to meet learners' needs in large classes, where children with complex needs all require different kinds of support.^{iv}

ASN as a Driver of Teacher Workload

Simply, there are not enough staff in the education system, and those who are there have too little time, often too many different additional support needs to meet within large classes, too little professional learning, and too few resources to meet the array of needs before them.

Meeting the growing additional support needs of Scotland's pupils is becoming a key driver of workload for teachers – as successive EIS surveys have shown. In the 2023 member survey almost two thirds of members who responded said that 'more classroom assistants/support for inclusion and pupils with additional support needs would make the biggest difference in reducing their workload'.^v

We can summarise the problems in ASN provision in four categories^{vi}:

- **Undervaluing of ASN** as a specialism, including too few specialist ASN units and evidence that members cannot access specialist support for their pupils at the point of identified need.
- **Under-investing in ASN** including the under-investment in specialist ASN teacher numbers, overburdening of current ASN teachers and support staff, delayed identification of need and insufficient access to associated professionals and specialist support services.
- **Rising need of ASN** with not only more pupils than ever being diagnosed with an additional support need, but also the rising number of children and young people needing support for their mental health. There has also been a rise in the number of children and young people living in poverty in recent years.
- **Broader educational issues** which have resulted in narrow attainment narratives and difficulties accessing 'alternative assessment arrangements'.

Joint Statement on ASN

With Additional Support Needs (ASN) in our schools at an all-time high, and recognition that the gap between ASN policy and practice is now 'intolerable', trade unions and organisations representing teachers, practitioners, support workers and parents joined together to issue a joint statement in the summer of 2024, outlining their shared concern at the insufficient levels of funding to deliver ASN provision. Across Scotland 43%^{vii} of pupils now require ASN support.^{viii}

The co-signatories of the statement are clear that such inadequate ASN provision is now having an impact across the whole learning population and is detrimental to the wellbeing of children and young people, the wellbeing of school staff, and the educational experience for many pupils.

The joint signatories have called on the Scottish Government and Education Authorities to put in place the requisite additional staffing and resources to fully implement the relevant legal duties and commitments in practice for all pupils with recognised additional needs. The full Joint Statement may be found in Appendix 1.

EIS General Secretary Andrea Bradley commented:

"The Scottish Government and Scotland's local authorities cannot sweep this issue under the carpet any longer – they must invest much more in ASN provision to ensure that we can mitigate the impact of poverty on children's education and truly get it right for every child."^{ix}

EIS ASN Objectives and The Manifesto Promise on Workload

EIS campaigning on workload and class size has taken strong account of the workload impacts of the responsibility for ASN that all teachers have, coupled with the under-resourcing of the education service generally, and the provision of ASN support specifically.

The SNP was elected to form the current Scottish Government on their 2021 election manifesto, which as a result of EIS campaigning, included significant commitments on education resourcing; on teacher numbers, and on teaching time. Unfortunately, since its election the Scottish Government has not delivered the manifesto promise of reducing class contact time to 21 hours per week as a means of addressing teacher workload, and the EIS is campaigning in order to persuade the Scottish Government to do so.

In December 2024, the Scottish Government and COSLA made an agreement^x “to make meaningful progress towards reducing class contact time for teachers, in recognition of the asks made by teachers and teaching unions.”^{xi} Included in this announcement from the Scottish Government was the promise of £28 million “to develop the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) education workforce along with an enhanced offer in support, spanning all stages of the curriculum from the early years to the end of secondary.” A further £1 million was also pledged to support national initiatives which will help to recruit and train more ASN teachers.

A dispute has been lodged against the Scottish Government, and COSLA, at the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT). A consultative ballot for industrial action to pursue the dispute received the overwhelming support of members, and a statutory ballot opened in November 2025 in pursuit of this dispute.

National Statistics on Additional Support Needs

The EIS remains firmly committed to inclusive education in principle. We believe that education is a human right and that inclusive education, i.e. schools and classes comprising a diverse mix of learners, is the foundation of a more just society.

The following graphs outline how the number of pupils with an identified Additional Support Need has increased in recent years, and how many of these pupils are now spending all of their time in mainstream classes.

Figure 1: Pupils with Additional Support Needs as a percentage of school roll 2007 – 2025 (All Sectors, Primary and Secondary)^{xii}

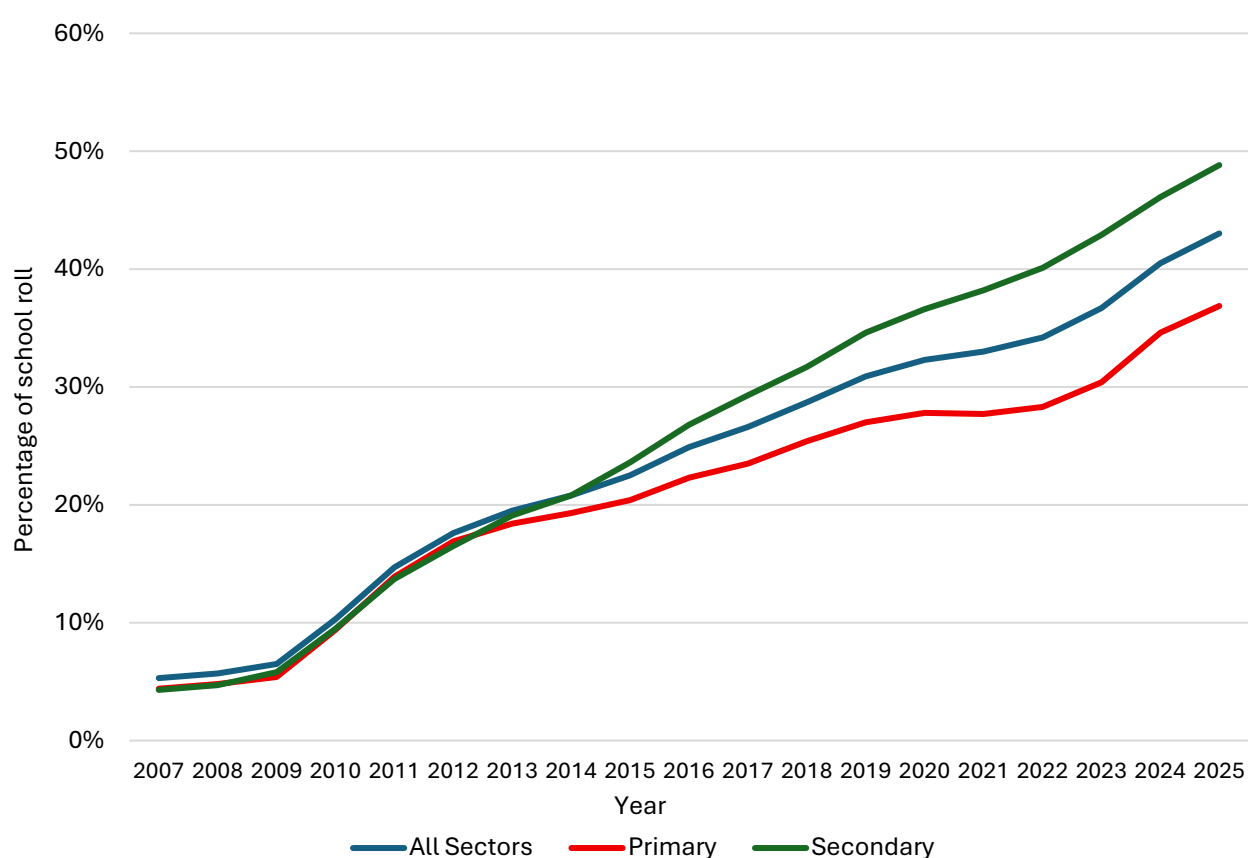
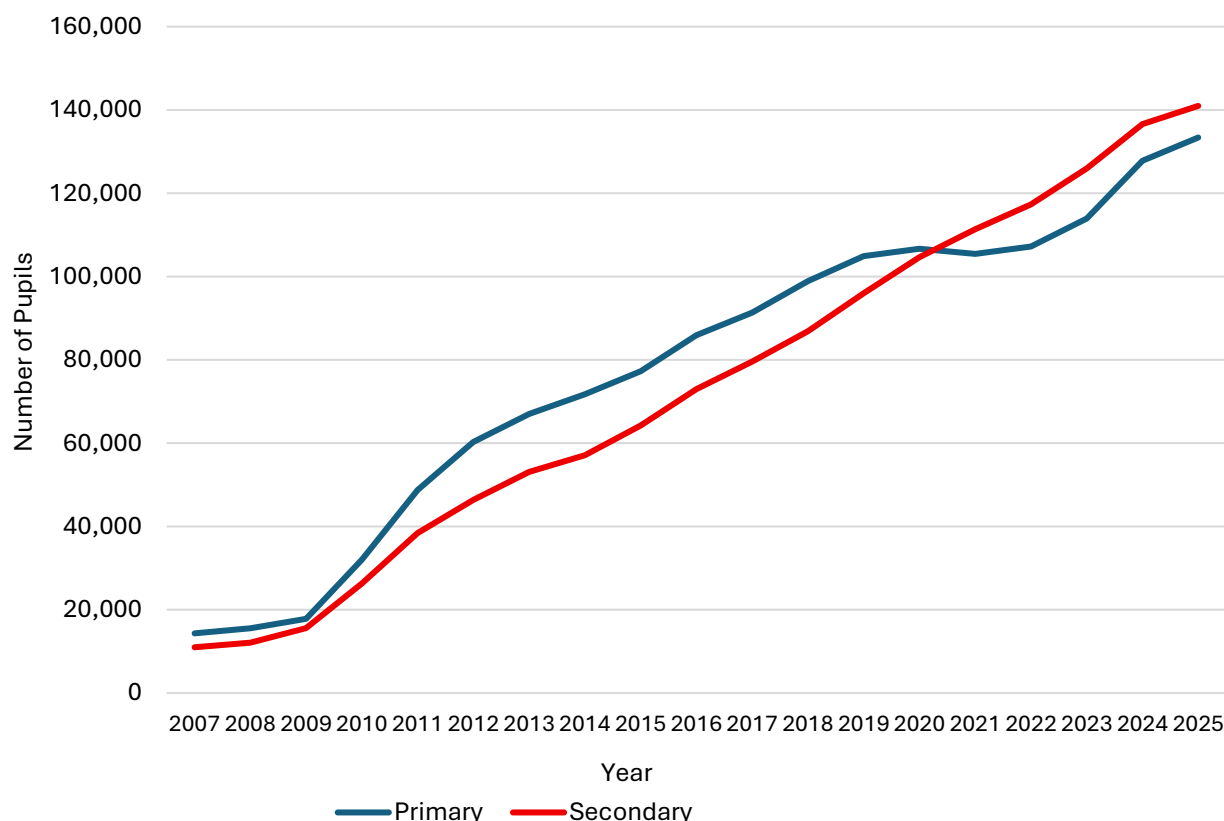


Figure 1 above shows the number of pupils recognised with additional support needs has increased from 16,478 pupils with ASN in the primary sector in 2007 to 137,312 in 2025. The number of pupils with ASN in the secondary sector has increased from 13,357 in 2007 to 154,044 in 2025.

Using the most recent teacher and pupil data published by the Scottish Government in December 2025^{xiii}, the overall number of pupils with ASN (for all sectors including special) has increased from 36,544 in 2007 to 299,445 in 2025; i.e. from 5.3% to 43%. **This represents a percentage increase in the number of pupils with ASN of over 710% between 2007 and 2025.**

Figure 2: Number of Pupils with Additional Support Needs spending all the time in mainstream classes 2007-2025 (Primary and Secondary)^{xiv}



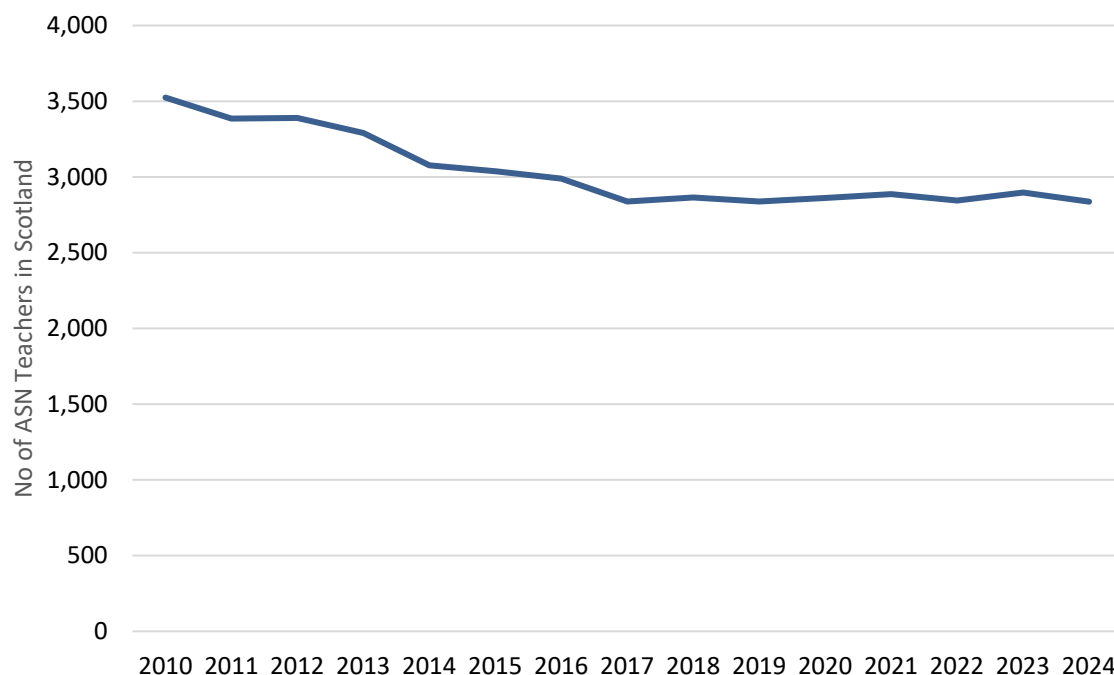
The pupil census shows that the number of children with Additional Support needs spending all of their time in mainstream classes has increased from a total of 24,290 in 2007 to 274,368^{xv} in 2025 - **more than a ten-fold increase.**

In 2007, 70% of children and young people with Additional Support Needs spent all of their time in mainstream classes, this has increased to 92% in 2025.^{xvi}

The number of school pupils with an ASN in special schools has fluctuated slightly between 1996, which is the earliest record provided in the pupil census, and 2025. In 1996 there were 8,077 pupils in special schools. This figure has fluctuated slightly over the years with numbers consistently going down between a peak recording of 8,318 in 2000 and to only 6,709 in 2007. Since 2007 there has been a general upwards trend in the number of pupils in special schools most recently recorded at 8,089 in 2025.^{xvii} This shows that whilst there has been a remarkable increase in the number of pupils identified with an additional support need, the number enrolled in special school education has still not matched the peak number recorded in 2000.

Simultaneously, Figure 3 (below) shows that the number of ASN teachers registered in the teacher census across the same time period has decreased from 3,524 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) in 2010 to 2,837 in 2024. This represents a percentage decrease in the number of ASN teachers working in Scotland's schools of 20%.

Figure 3: Additional Support Needs teachers in Scotland, 2010-2024



When we look at the local authority breakdown of the number of ASN teachers provided across each of Scotland's 32 councils there is also a considerable variation between each region as shown in Table 1 (below). East Dunbartonshire for example has almost doubled the number of FTE ASN teachers in their region from 59 recorded in 2010, to 101 in 2024. Midlothian has also increased their ASN teacher numbers by more than 50% with 40 FTE ASN teachers recorded in 2010 and 62 in 2024.

Glasgow City Council, Scotland's largest council area by population, has decreased its ASN teacher numbers by almost half from 325 FTE in 2010 to 179 FTE in 2024. South Lanarkshire has also cut their ASN teacher numbers significantly, by almost a third, from 157 FTE in 2010 to 109 FTE in 2024.

These differing patterns are concerning. The EIS believes that education funding should be ringfenced in order to ensure that all education monies received by councils are spent on education, with further clearly specified parameters in the allocation of funds towards ASN provision that all local authorities are required to act within.

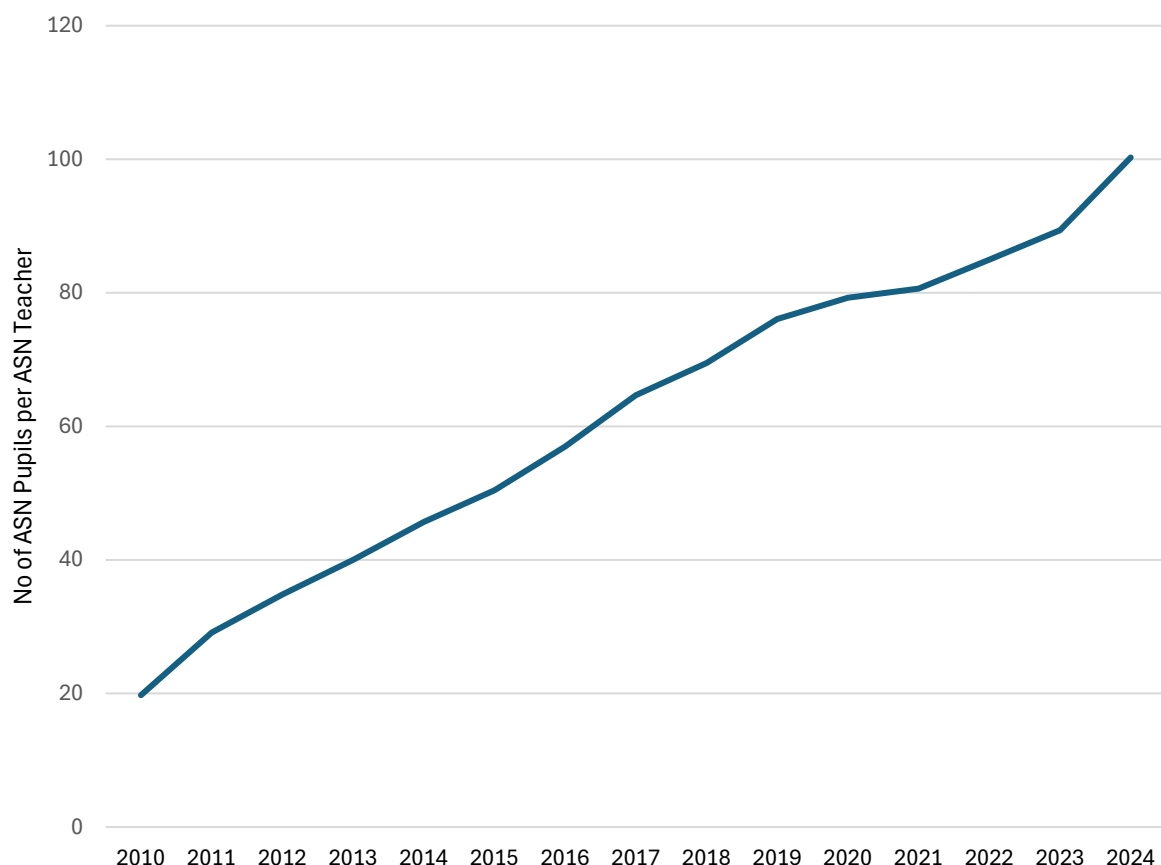
Table 1: Additional support needs teachers (FTE) in all sectors by local authority, 2010-2024^{xviii}

Local Authority	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Aberdeen City	191	181	187	167	136	128	135	131	131	150	152	149	113	112	116
Aberdeenshire	297	292	284	272	248	269	269	255	247	258	265	276	276	287	262
Angus	97	103	94	83	80	83	83	77	78	84	84	83	85	87	85
Argyll and Bute	42	42	43	41	40	45	46	48	49	53	49	51	44	45	47
City of Edinburgh	189	182	173	170	155	139	135	131	133	135	152	170	169	166	165
Clackmannanshire	30	30	26	24	30	30	30	31	29	33	35	34	34	36	37
Dumfries and Galloway	136	128	136	127	122	107	103	96	96	98	100	92	78	79	81
Dundee City	165	154	157	146	147	137	126	114	106	100	106	105	93	103	101
East Ayrshire	110	109	111	111	107	107	112	114	117	112	119	114	119	110	116
East Dunbartonshire	59	57	63	64	56	61	71	62	104	113	108	104	97	105	101
East Lothian	56	58	55	49	50	46	43	37	38	37	35	40	39	41	46
East Renfrewshire	36	34	44	43	42	41	45	38	36	31	28	30	34	34	31
Falkirk	134	136	127	127	118	110	104	105	96	86	81	74	74	90	87
Fife	236	210	209	212	173	194	199	180	176	174	170	179	179	181	176
Glasgow City	325	280	311	293	260	230	200	157	171	157	151	182	183	192	179
Highland	191	172	164	151	130	165	166	176	175	164	160	154	150	157	159
Inverclyde	49	44	48	46	37	41	46	41	35	32	31	32	31	27	34
Midlothian	40	38	40	60	57	51	52	46	53	51	52	60	61	65	62
Moray	103	103	104	97	92	92	82	88	91	95	83	85	97	101	87
Na h-Eileanan Siar	23	24	23	23	16	15	23	21	24	20	21	19	23	20	18
North Ayrshire	117	123	121	125	125	126	117	115	108	111	110	103	100	109	103
North Lanarkshire	190	180	167	145	146	134	166	154	161	143	154	126	123	122	115
Orkney Islands	22	26	27	32	29	29	28	29	31	28	29	30	22	26	27
Perth and Kinross	73	62	69	84	92	90	89	88	88	82	81	91	94	103	111
Renfrewshire	53	58	55	58	53	49	43	42	51	56	54	52	60	60	54
Scottish Borders	66	90	89	83	87	85	78	74	69	64	66	63	67	57	61
Shetland Islands	50	44	41	41	37	41	39	38	37	34	41	41	48	49	46
South Ayrshire	106	101	109	106	103	100	94	91	90	97	101	103	99	94	95
South Lanarkshire	157	158	152	150	137	130	115	116	111	103	105	109	120	117	109
Stirling	44	40	36	39	41	42	38	37	37	39	45	41	40	43	39
West Dunbartonshire	48	51	50	48	60	55	47	45	44	45	44	46	46	39	43
West Lothian	88	76	76	73	71	66	62	61	55	52	49	45	44	42	43
All local authorities	3,524	3,384	3,389	3,290	3,075	3,036	2,988	2,836	2,863	2,836	2,860	2,886	2,843	2,896	2,835
Grant aided	1	1	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Scotland	3,524	3,385	3,390	3,290	3,077	3,038	2,990	2,838	2,865	2,838	2,862	2,887	2,844	2,898	2,837

Figure 4 below shows the teacher pupil ratio of pupils with an Additional Support Need, to the number of teachers employed in an ASN capacity. This too shows that **nationally, the teacher pupil ratio measured in terms of ASN has increased fivefold from a ratio of 1 ASN teacher (FTE) to 20 ASN pupils in 2010 (1:20) to 1:100 in 2024.**

Figure 4 shows the effect of increasing numbers of pupils with ASN whilst simultaneously cutting the number of ASN teachers – **the amount of ASN specialist teacher support to each pupil has fallen by an average of 80%.** This has left class teachers picking up a larger load with significantly less specialist ASN support.

Figure 4: Ratio of ASN Pupils vs Full-Time Equivalent ASN Teachers 2010 - 2024^{xix}



All of the national data included above illustrates that the identified needs of pupils in Scotland's schools has gone up exponentially; at the same time the number of specialist ASN teachers has been significantly reduced since 2010. Other resources and the number of professionals have simply not kept up with demand leaving a perfect storm. Scotland's teachers are shouldering the burden of filling in this chasm between the promise of ASL legislation in Scotland, and its practical implementation. The next section of this briefing outlines the human impact of this within Scotland's schools.

National Members' Survey ASN Findings 2025

Insufficient support to meet the growing number of children and young people with identified Additional Support Needs has long been raised by EIS members as a key workload concern. As the number of pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN) continues to rise within Scotland's schools the levels of resourcing to meet the needs of these children and young people continue to fall far, far, short of what is needed.

Our National Members' Survey (2025) returned over 11,000 responses – and it gives us an accurate snapshot of members' experiences in 2025. Within the 2025 EIS Member Survey members were asked about their experiences of meeting the needs of the pupils with Additional Support Needs within their care.

Figure 5: “To what extent do you feel that you have sufficient time in a typical working week to complete paperwork, liaise with colleagues and external agencies, and attend meetings in relation to supporting pupils with Additional Support Needs?”

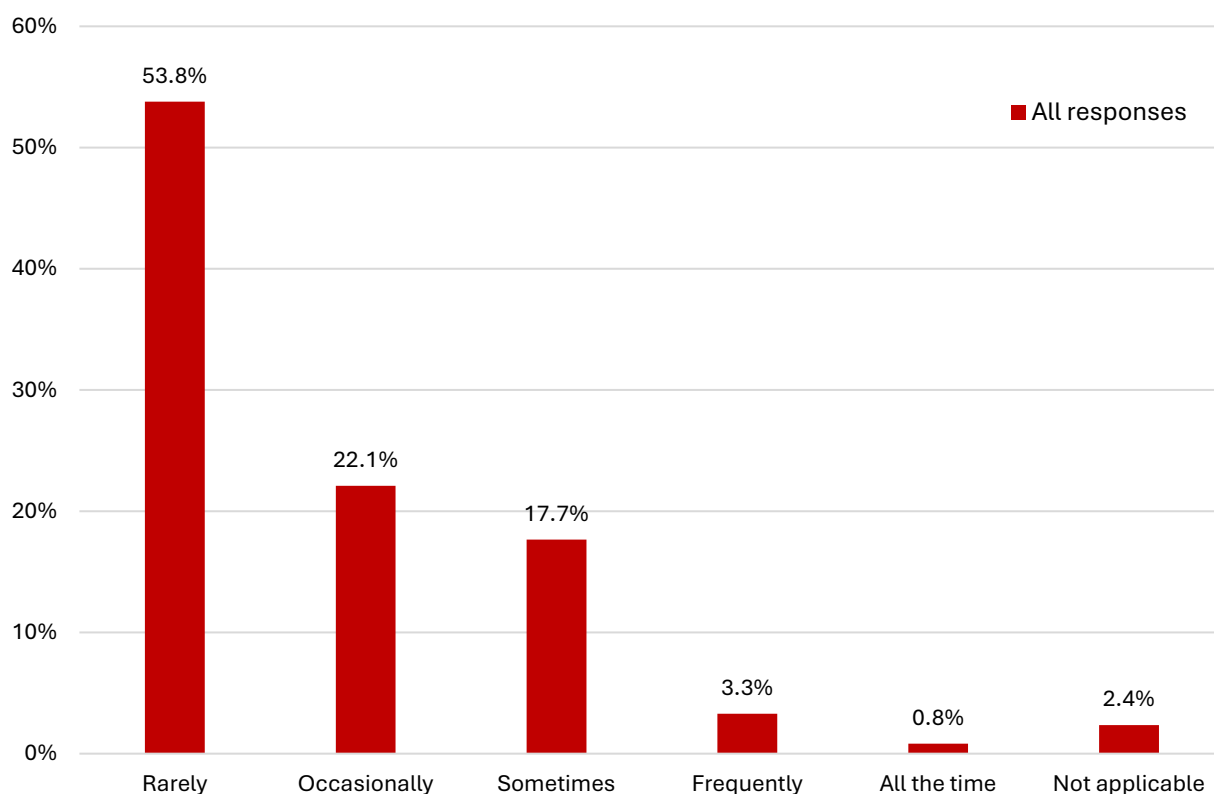


Figure 5 above shows that less than 1% of members surveyed said they had sufficient time “all the time” within a typical working week to carry out the tasks needed to support pupils with Additional Support Needs. Almost all members have insufficient time to support ASN pupils.

There were 635 additional comments recorded under this question. Members detailed their experiences of trying to balance all of the demands that are placed on them, and the constant

challenges to provide children and young people with the support they need whilst resources are scarce.

“The additional meetings, paperwork, parental liaison and planning for children with additional support needs and challenging behaviour is all consuming.”

“I am a supply teacher, but when I have more than a day or 2 in schools I can never complete all the planning and marking in the normal working hours.”

Many others highlighted the personal and professional toll that these increasing demands placed on them including sacrificing their personal time and having to pass up on career development opportunities.

“I feel that I am continually chasing my tail. In addition, I feel that I am not completing lesson to the standard I would like. Everything is rushed and this is impacting the quality of learning.”

“Due to lack of time I feel that planning for ASN is always done in my own time and there is never any time to talk through this with PSAs. Meetings seem to be arranged during NCCT which we are then never given back.”

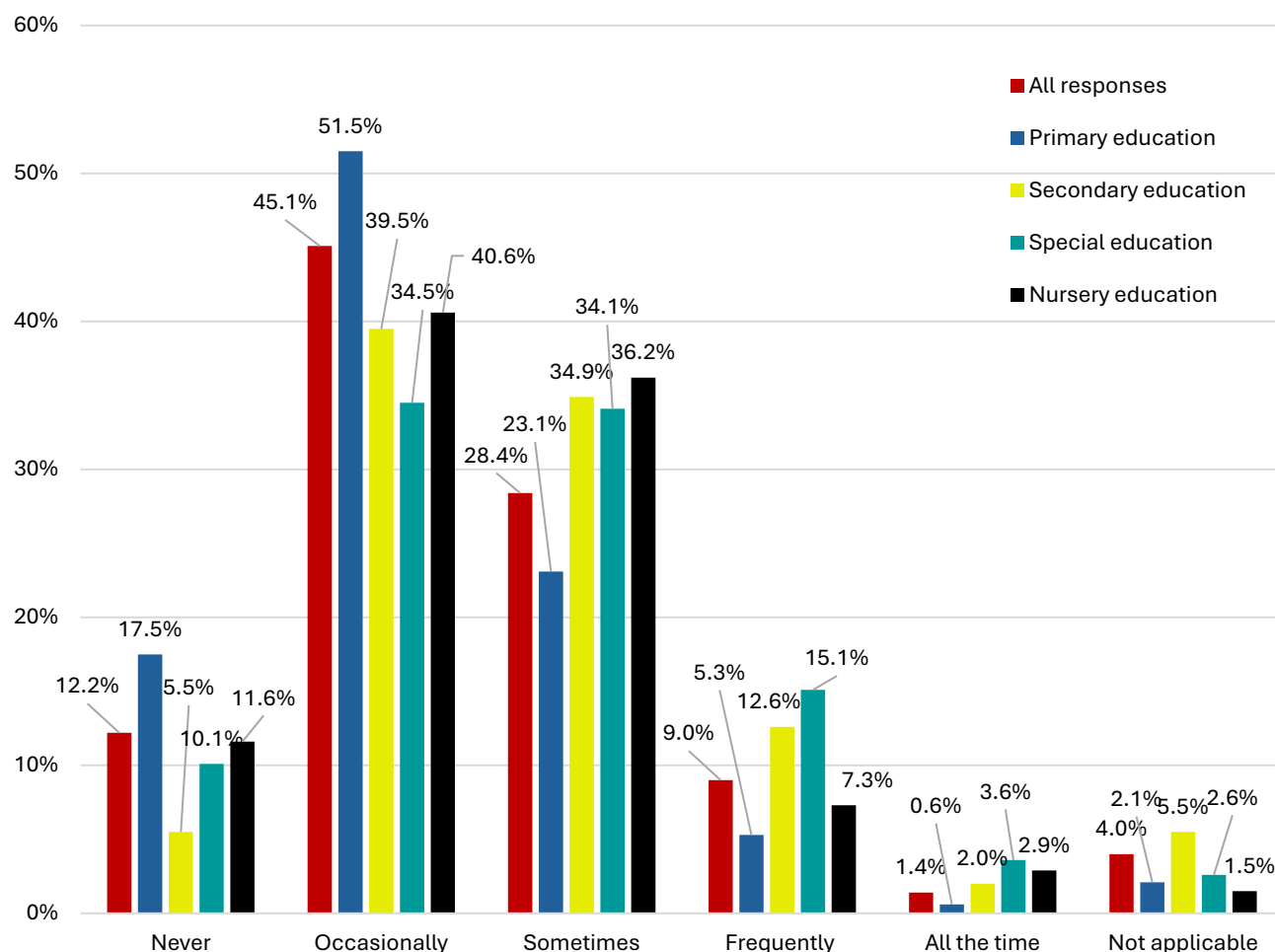
“I have an opportunity to do a GTCS Professional Recognition award, but will have to turn it down as my school duties are wearing me out.”

The vast majority of the comments left highlighted just how difficult and stressful it can be to try to balance meetings, paperwork and liaise with colleagues. Some members also suggested that they felt they were simply not able to fully support some of their pupils based on the time constraints and lack of resourcing for ASN.

“Liaising with colleagues is so beneficial yet everyone is so overworked they don't have time to do this which is obviously detrimental to the progress and development of the young learners.”

“Over 40% of my class have recognised Additional Support Needs or behavioural difficulties. I am supposed to meet with ASN teachers/staff to plan for them but there is neither the time, the resources, nor the staff to do this.”

Figure 6: “To what extent are children and young people in your setting able to access frontline support services at the point when their support need is identified?” responses by sector



Members were also asked if they were able to access front line support services for children and young people at the point when needs are identified. Just over 1% of respondents said they could access this support, at the point when the need was identified, “all the time”. Around three quarters of respondents said they could access this support “occasionally” or “sometimes”, with over 10% saying they could “never” access this support at the point which the need was identified.

Those working in special education were most likely to say they could access this support “frequently” (15.1%) or “all the time” (3.6%). Those working in primary education were most likely to report (17.5%) that they could “never” access frontline support services when the need was identified.

Over 760 comments were left by members under this question. Most of the comments gathered mentioned that many pupils are languishing on referral waiting lists for a very long time – sometimes years. This can mean that by the time they are seen by the most appropriate professionals their needs have considerably increased.

“Waiting lists for CAMHs and other services is 1.5 to 2 years+. Children in crisis are not getting the support they need, therefore this is having a negative impact on functionality of school, workload and time spent supporting children who are unregulated.”

“Support takes so long that by time it arrives situation is always significantly worse. Every day is about managing high tariff pupils to stop then destroying the learning of others. Those who need learning support are abandoned.”

“Always a long wait especially for neurodiversity referrals.”

Some members highlighted what they try to do to support their pupils, whilst also pointing out that they are often not trained or best placed to be offering support such as mental health support.

“I try to support my children as best as I can but with minimal resources and zero PSA assistance, it is extremely difficult and often children’s specific needs are not fully met during the day to day running of the class.”

“My establishment works hard to offer bespoke, tailored support to individuals but I am very aware that this is not the case across our cluster never mind authority. We try hard in our setting but lack of staff, resources and time mean many staff feel we are not supporting individuals as well as we could.”

Others simply highlighted their frustration at trying to get their pupils the support they need highlighting the bureaucracy involved to access support.

“Frontline services are never available to children when they need them. A paper trail must be kept or they end up on ridiculously long waiting lists for services. There isn’t the man power readily available in schools to properly provide support either so more pressure is put onto the class teacher.”

It was also highlighted by some members that they didn’t believe that they, as teachers, had the training, expertise or resources needed to support their pupils with the full range of mental health needs within their classrooms.

“In particular in relation to mental health. Increasing teacher’s skills in this area is important but increasingly we are being expected to be mental health experts. Many pupils require therapeutic interventions which school are not designed or skilled enough to deliver.”

These results mirror those of previous surveys showing that the under-resourcing of ASN support is becoming an entrenched issue. The EIS has been warning for years that the workload pressures of meeting this growing need, and the stress of not accessing the professional support that both pupils and teachers need, may lead to teacher burn out.

Within the member survey, there were also additional sections that members could opt into. The first additional section looked at the issue of ASN and was completed by almost 7,000 members. The following questions have been taken from this additional section of the survey.

Figure 7: “To what extent do you agree with the following statement: ‘There are insufficient resources to support the effective implementation of the presumption of mainstreaming in my setting’.”

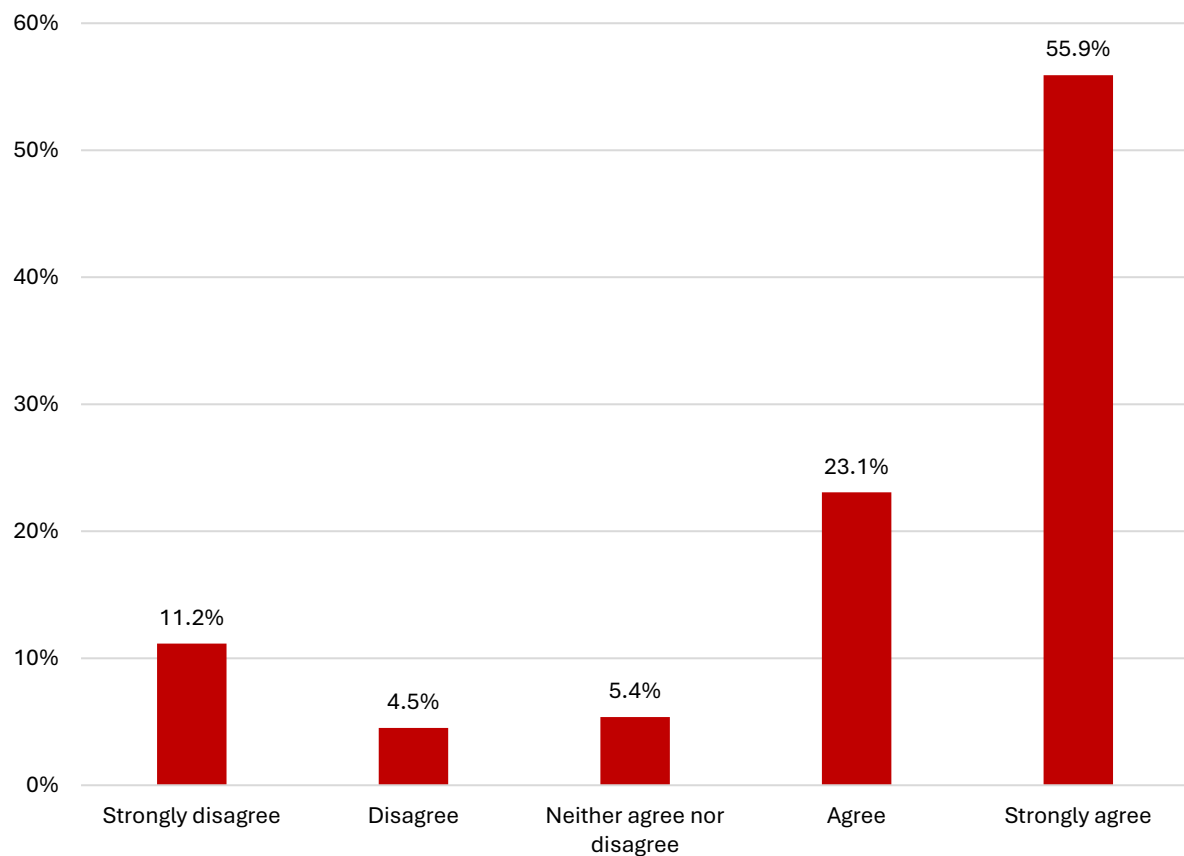


Figure 7 above shows that 79% of respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that there are insufficient resources to support mainstreaming in their educational settings.

Figure 8, then goes on to show, that almost all members (99%) said that the under-resourcing of additional support needs under the presumption of mainstreaming has an impact on pupils. When asked what these impacts were, Figure 9 outlines their responses; with ASN pupils not receiving the support they need, impacts on pupil behaviour, and pupils without an ASN also having their support needs unmet, being the top 3 answers members gave.

Figure 8: “Does the under-resourcing of additional support needs under the presumption of mainstreaming have an impact on pupils?”

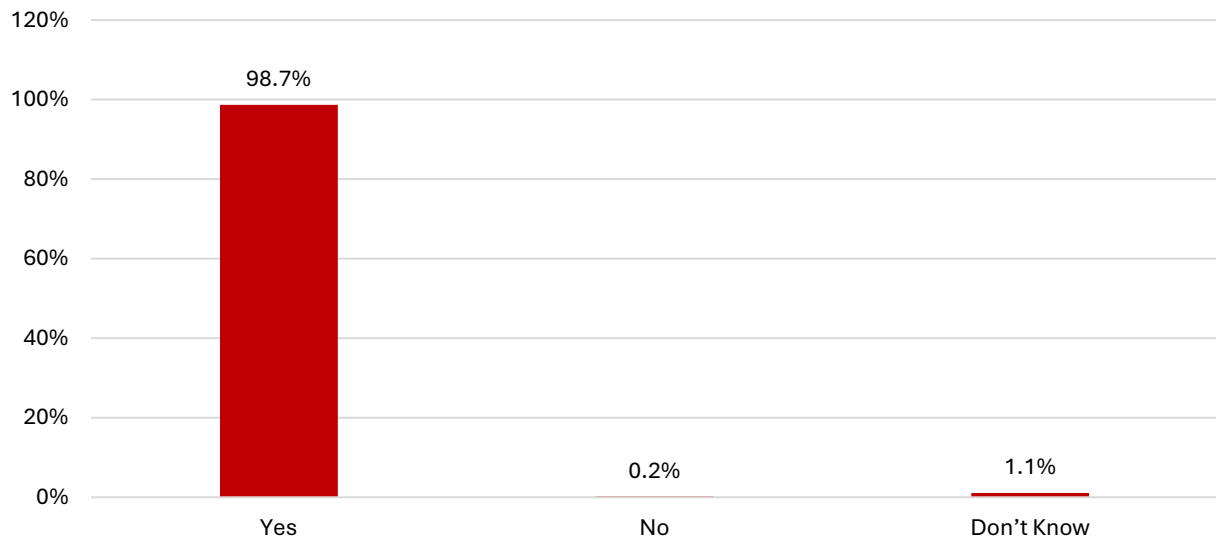
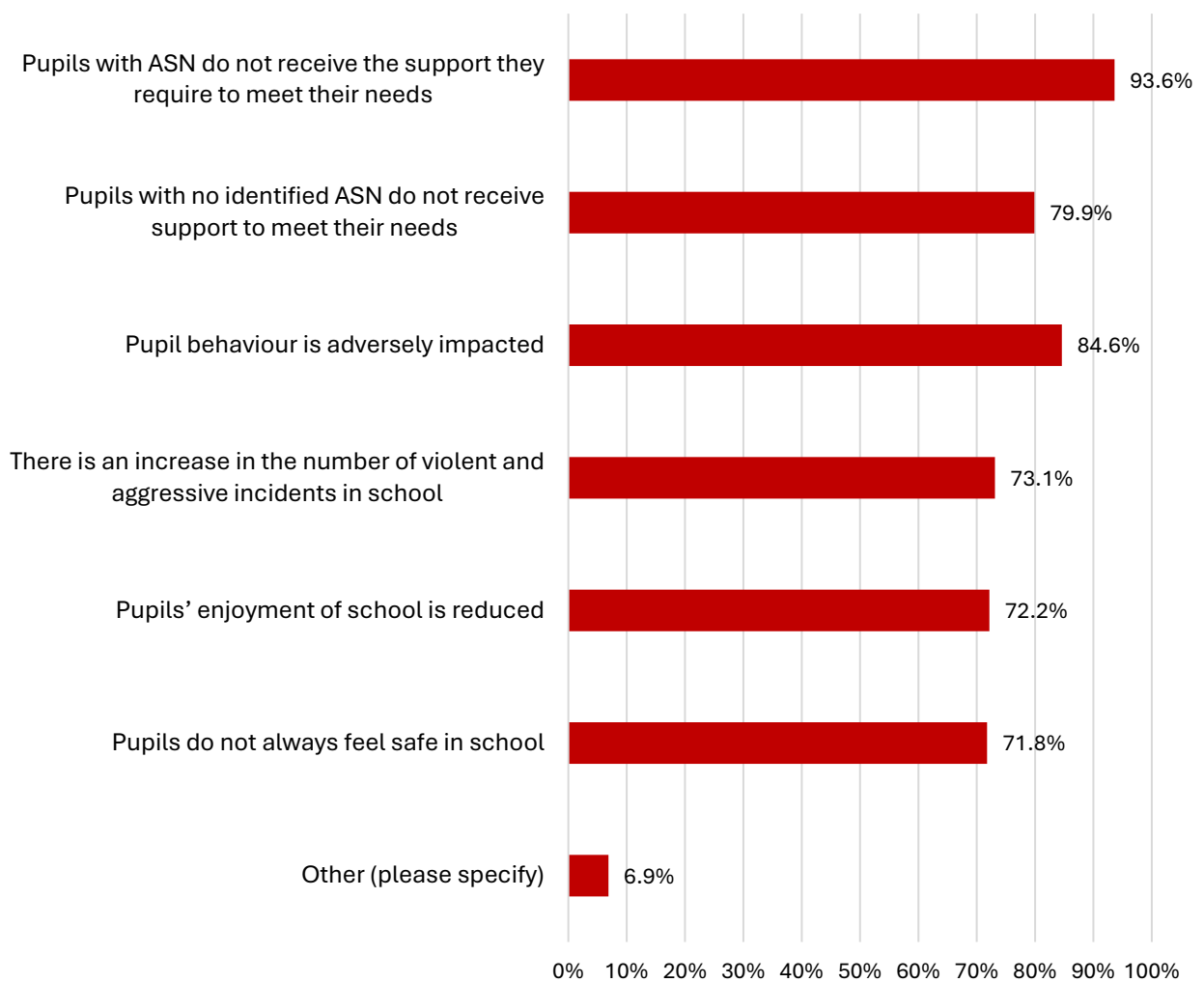


Figure 9: “If yes, please indicate the impact on pupils (tick all that apply):”



Under the “other” option to the question above some of the additional impacts on pupils included:

- Some pupils with ASN are bullied or left feeling isolated
- Some pupils are also being harmed because of pupils with ASN not getting the support they need, which can also lead to school refusals
- Staff left feeling stressed, helpless, frustrated and even left feeling unsafe when at work
- The opportunities of all pupils to learn were impacted, impacting on attainment as well as pupils’ overall school experiences
- There can be a mismatch between what parents have been told their child should receive and what the school is able to provide.

Figure 10 below shows that almost all members (99%) said “yes” under-resourcing of Additional Support Needs under the presumption of mainstreaming has had an impact on teachers.

Figure 10: “Does the under-resourcing of additional support needs under the presumption of mainstreaming have an impact on teachers?”

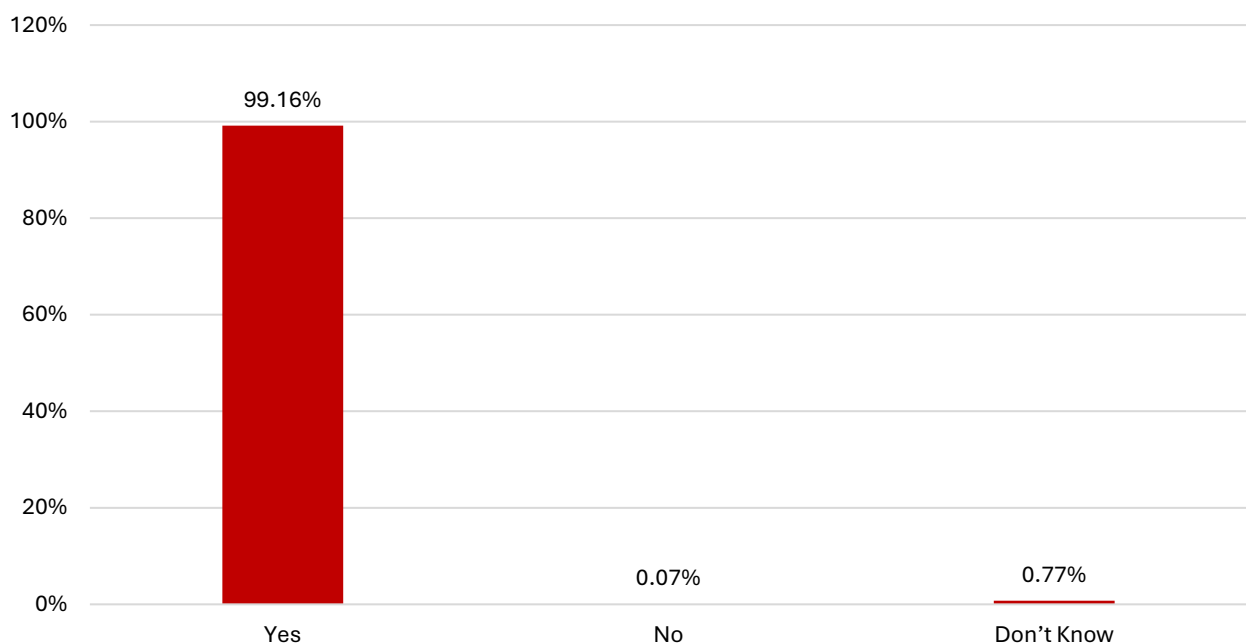


Figure 11: “If yes, please indicate the impact it has on teachers (tick all that apply):”

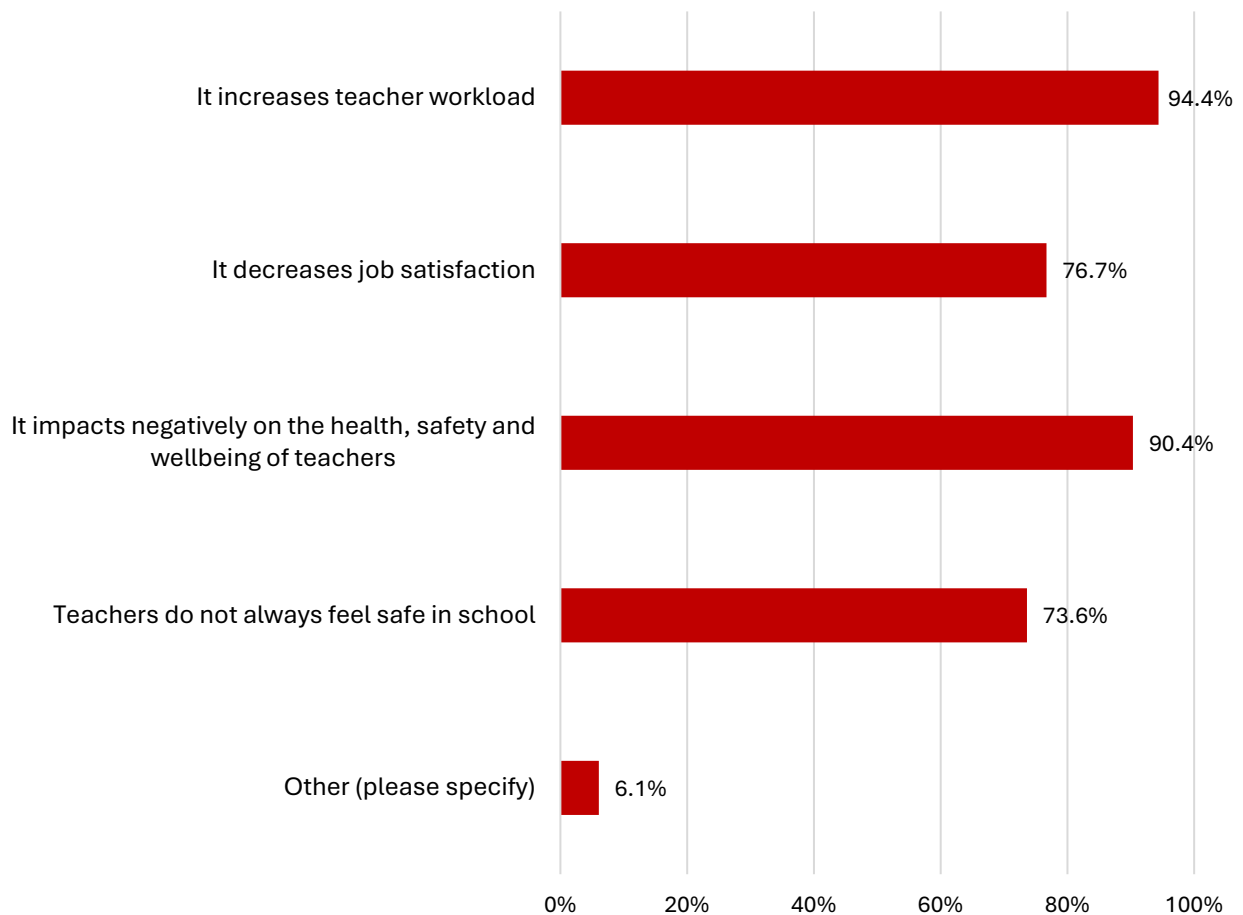


Figure 11 above, then shows all of the ways in which members believe teachers have been impacted by the under-resourcing of the presumption of mainstreaming. Almost all members (94%) who responded to this question said that it increased teacher workload, with a further 90% saying that it also impacted on the health, safety and wellbeing of teachers. Three quarters (74%) of all respondents said teachers do not always feel safe in school.

Finally, there were some additional questions within the members' survey that explored workload, and what members perceived to be the biggest impacts to their workload and wellbeing at work. These final four questions explore the impact of unmet ASN on teacher workload and wellbeing.

Table 2: “Beyond teaching, preparation and correction what are the biggest drivers of your workload? (please tick the top 5)” responses by sector

	All responses	Primary education	Secondary education	Special education	Nursery education
Tracking and monitoring activities	67.4%	69.6%	68.2%	61.1%	83.1%
Reporting to parents	39.8%	41.9%	37.3%	47.3%	28.2%
Changes to the curriculum	28.9%	29.4%	31.2%	19.0%	28.2%
Responding to management requests	49.1%	48.8%	51.0%	43.4%	52.1%
Managing the behaviour of students	70.2%	72.3%	71.8%	66.8%	52.1%
Additional tasks which require training/ professional learning	30.3%	36.2%	20.7%	34.2%	42.3%
Activities outwith the pupil day (e.g. clubs, events, etc.)	11.7%	9.5%	15.8%	2.9%	1.4%
Completing paperwork/ admin/ bureaucracy	74.9%	77.6%	72.1%	73.8%	76.1%
Carrying out standardised assessments	13.6%	14.9%	13.2%	6.3%	5.6%
Covering other classes because of staff shortages/ lack of cover/ unfilled vacancies	31.8%	19.6%	49.6%	35.6%	21.1%
Responding to national consultations	2.4%	2.1%	2.2%	3.7%	4.2%
Other (please specify)	8.7%	7.9%	8.8%	9.4%	14.1%

Table 2 above shows how members responded when asked what the biggest drivers of their workload are, beyond teaching, preparation and correction. Around three quarters (74.9%) of all members reported completing paperwork/admin/bureaucracy as one of their biggest drivers of workload. Managing the behaviour of students was the second most reported driver of workload, followed by tracking and monitoring of activities. Table 3 below highlights the additional comments that were left under this question. Many of these comments referenced the paperwork, and managing the behaviour of pupils with an ASN, as a significant cause of the drivers indicated in Table 2 above.

Data from the 2024 pupil census shows that “social, emotional and behavioural difficulty” was the most recorded reason for pupils’ additional support need – 70,988 pupils in 2024.^{xx} This has now increased to 77,405 pupils recorded with a social, emotional or behavioural difficulty Additional Support Need. The issues arising from the behaviour of pupils with ASN affect teachers’ workload – both in class and after the class/lesson to follow up on incidents and on other pupils.

Table 3: Breakdown of comments submitted under “other” option in response to “Beyond teaching, preparation and correction what are the biggest drivers of your workload? (please tick the top 5)”

Comment themes from extended answers	Number of mentions	Mentions by percentage
Additional Support Needs (ASN)	193	21.8%
Not enough non-contact time	94	10.7%
Preparing for practical lessons	87	9.9%
Coursework	84	9.5%
Staff absences and supporting colleagues	81	9.2%
Communicating with parents/carers/stakeholders	52	5.9%
Multi-level teaching	44	5%
Information and Communications Technology (ICT)	37	4.2%
Marking	28	3.2%
New Initiatives	26	3%
Responding/reporting pupil behaviour	25	2.8%
School reviews/inspections	17	1.9%

Under the “other” option, 882 comments were gathered. Key issues that members raised, including a lack of support around meeting children and young people’s additional support needs, is shown in table above. This included meeting the diverse range of needs, as well as the increasing number of pupils that have identified needs.

“I have a child in my class who is non-verbal autistic with destructive and violent escalating behaviours. I am basically doing 2 jobs creating a curriculum for him based on the pre-milestones and it's very demoralising as I have double the workload but the learner cannot access them as I have not support for them and management have said no one to one is allowed. It is so demoralising and awful because the child deserves a placement where he can be happy and safe and the other members of his class aren't being hit, pulled, prodded, spat on, work ripped up etc.”

“Planning for the widespread of ability and making resources across the curriculum to try and meet every learners needs.”

Members also said they did not have enough non-contact time for meetings and other key demands within the school. This included the pressures around completing coursework, tracking pupils’ learning and filing reports.

“Personalising resources for pupils with additional support needs as well as teaching and directing PSAs who are working directly with individuals to upskill them drives a lot of my workload.”

“I am a guidance teacher teaching 20 periods weekly. Every non-contact period is used to complete pastoral tasks. All preparation for classes and marking I am forced to do at

home. I teach more than guidance teachers in most other authorities. The job is relentless nowadays. I've been doing this job for 20+ years and have never been so dissatisfied.."

These additional comments also highlighted the complexity involved when supporting pupils. There were mentions of the workload associated with handling behaviour issues with the pupil, and with the parents/carers. Respondents also highlighted the workload associated with supporting vulnerable children and young people, as well as those with additional support needs.

"Dealing with behaviour issues. Parental contact as a result. Underfunded inclusion. Lack of PSA support in class for learning activities"

"Consultation and reviewing vulnerable children and young people with busy teaching staff"

One of the key questions put to members within the 2024/2025 survey asked members what would make the biggest impact in reducing their workload. Almost two thirds of members (64%) said that "more classroom assistants/support for inclusion and pupils with additional support needs" would make the biggest difference, as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: “Which of the following do you think would make the biggest impact in reducing your workload” (please tick the top 3) responses by sector

	All responses	Primary education	Secondary education	Special education	Nursery education
Smaller class sizes	49.6%	59.6%	42.3%	24.6%	32.8%
Less paperwork/ bureaucracy	45.3%	46.4%	42.7%	54.6%	47.8%
Realistic expectations regarding digital learning	11%	9.9%	11.8%	12.5%	13.4%
Fewer contact hours with pupils	36.3%	25.4%	53.2%	34.9%	10.5%
Fewer changes to the curriculum and new initiatives	23.8%	23.9%	24.7%	22.8%	25.4%
More curriculum support	10.12%	10.3%	10.1%	11.3%	3%
More resources/ funding to support pupils learning	39.44%	41%	33.9%	56.3%	46.3%
More staff/supply cover (including access to subject specialists)	34.1%	31.9%	36.2%	41.1%	37.3%
More classroom assistants/support for inclusion and pupils with additional support needs	63.5%	76.1%	48.6%	59.3%	67.2%
Professional autonomy/being left to do my job	19.6%	18.5%	20.1%	24.6%	17.9%
More supportive management/leadership	16.6%	12.5%	20.7%	23.6%	16.4%
Improved pupil behaviour within the classroom	47.8%	47%	53.3%	28.6%	38.8%
Other (please specify)	5%	4.3%	4.7%	7.1%	3%

Under the “other” category members highlighted the many workload pressures that they face during their working week. Many responses highlighted the need for more professional support including more classroom assistants, support for learning staff, auxiliaries to help prepare for lessons, as well as more professional support from outside agencies including mental health support and referrals for children and young people with complex needs.

“As DHT [Deputy Head Teacher] - more support available from external support such as Ed Psych [Educational Psychology], CAHMS, Social Work, Third Sector, School Nurse and

liaison with health professionals and authority provision for pupils with extra needs - support eroded over the years due to budget cuts and demand in other service areas but still pupils often left with internal/ external support options due to reduction in staffing/ budget cuts."

"People are the most valuable resource we have - we currently have more support needs than ever, quite exceptional in some cases, and less staff - current support staff are often 1 to 1 to support children with SEBN and ASN to allow these children to have safe and positive school experiences whilst ensuring the safety of others - meaning general support for raising and closing the attainment gap is impossible."

It was also raised within the comments section how much of their workload is driven by managing pupil behaviour, even more so when colleagues are pulled out of their classrooms to support in the management of pupils.

"I actually can't cope with the levels of disruptive behaviour that occurs in the class. It's very demoralising and makes me feel like I can't do my job.."

"More support for ASN. Universal support is ok on paper, but many of the behaviour issues could be nipped in the bud if there was more PSA support in classrooms. This would then save loads of time with follow up phone calls, forms, meetings because there would be less incidents/problems."

The final question within this section of the survey asked members if they had any final comments they would like to share about their workload. There were 2,575 comments gathered under this question, that mirrored the themes that have been raised throughout this section. Members again mentioned the long hours that their jobs demand, to a large extent, as a result of the workload demands around ASN.

"Most teachers I know spend a day or part of a day at weekends getting prepared."

"Workload is unsustainable due to class contact time, emails regarding pupil ASN/behaviour etc."

"The main reason I work so many extra hours is I do a lot of paperwork, planning or finding resources for so many individual children with ASN within my class and care. This has a knock on impact on what I would have considered as my 'tasks' for the week as stated in the school's working time agreement as well as my planning time. I am forever playing 'catch-up' as there are so many individual needs within my class that I am trying to get it right for every child to the detriment of my own time and health."

The EIS believes that a significant amount of time and workload is expended on dealing with behaviour issues that are exacerbated by unmet ASN needs, and that these behaviours affect all pupils in the affected classes. Members also used this question to highlight again how difficult it is to support children and young people with additional support needs, at a time of rising demand and cuts to classroom support.

"Additional pressures are added on time for planning etc because I need to focus on strategies to support pupils with emotional/behaviour needs."

Another important theme that was highlighted repeatedly was managing pupil behaviour within schools. Some of these comments highlighted that they thought pupil behaviour in general was deteriorating, others mentioned a rise in the number of incidents that they were dealing with on a routine basis.

“Too many pupils with no speech and who have major behavioural problems are being put in mainstream schools where the building is not fit for their needs. I work in an open area where children from a base are crying and screaming continuously all day long. No one can use the open area due to the noise and random violent acts from some of the children.”

“Over 30% of my daily routine is dealing with pupil behaviour issues. I lose over 30% of teaching time dealing with multiple instances of low level disruption, having to log instances of poor behaviour having restorative conversations with pupils, completing referrals for pupil behaviour, managing pupils who are on mobile phones, contacting SLT regarding missing pupils from class.”

Finally, some members highlighted the impact that recent budget cuts were having on their workload and their ability to meet the needs of all pupils. The EIS has been campaigning for more resourcing across all areas of education, and the comments gathered from members on this issue highlights the impact that this is having day to day.

“This academic session is the worst I’ve ever seen in terms of the impact of budget cuts. Due to the increase in identified needs in P1, PSA support is now exclusive to early years and this leaves children who would otherwise benefit greatly from another adult to help with their learning unsupported. Coupled with an increase in disruptive behaviour and minimal SfL [Support for Learning] provision makes the school day less about teaching and learning and more about managing behaviour.”

“Can the government/councils please stop cutting funding to vital services including learning assistants. Give us the smaller classes they promised and stop pressuring schools to attain. Teachers are being asked to fudge predictions to appease councils. Absolutely scandalous. For some children just getting to school is a massive deal never mind attaining. Just stop with the pressure.”

Finally, we can also see from that member survey that members believe that having additional resources to support ASN pupils would have a positive impact on their wellbeing at work. Two thirds of members (66%) said that “more classroom assistants/support for inclusion and pupils with additional support needs” would make the greatest impact to improving their wellbeing at work – a higher percentage than any other answer choice as table 5 shows.

Table 5: “Which of the following do you think would make the greatest impact in improving your wellbeing at work?” responses by sector

	All responses	Primary education	Secondary education	Special education	Nursery education
Smaller class sizes	50.2%	60%	43%	26.5%	34.9%
Less paperwork/ bureaucracy	47.8%	50.3%	44.5%	50.4%	50%
Realistic expectations regarding digital learning	12.1%	12.6%	11.5%	10.5%	10.6%
Fewer contact hours with pupils	36.1%	27.3%	50.5%	33%	18.2%
Fewer changes to the curriculum and new initiatives	27.2%	29.4%	25.9%	23.1%	28.8%
More curriculum support	13.3%	14.6%	12.1%	14.2%	9.1%
More resources/ funding to support pupils learning	43.6%	47%	37.3%	54.3%	45.5%
More staff/supply cover (including access to subject specialists)	37.2%	36.1%	38.4%	42.5%	40.9%
More classroom assistants/support for inclusion and pupils with additional support needs	66%	78.9%	50.4%	61.3%	71.2%
Professional autonomy/being left to do my job	24.1%	24.5%	23.4%	26.3%	21.2%
More supportive management/leadership	24.7%	20.4%	29.5%	31.4%	18.2%
Improved pupil behaviour within the classroom	60.1%	61.6%	63.7%	38.3%	39.4%
Improved school buildings	16%	16.1%	13.3%	31.2%	21.2%
Improved ICT equipment and training	22.4%	21%	24.4%	22.9%	13.6%
Other (please specify)	5.1%	3.8%	5.4%	8.3%	4.6%

One of the most commonly identified issues in the “other” section was ASN, with some respondents going so far as to say that ASN needs could not be met within the practice of mainstreaming.

“Additional services put in place to help with children with ASN needs instead of it being left to class teacher to plan because in some cases class teachers are planning for more than 4 groups due to class sizes and levels of differentiation needed also some individual plans and milestones”

“More schools that can provide a specialist provision for children with more complex social, emotional and behavioural needs. Our current schools do not have appropriate spaces to provide the inclusive educational environment that they need to be thriving in. The school classroom cannot support children with these needs appropriately to ensure they are thriving. In turn, other children are equally not thriving as the class environment is become unsafe and unpredictable.”

“My main stress comes from trying to include pupils in my classroom who are not suited to a mainstream setting.”

The Impact of Under-Investing in ASN

Teachers have reported that the current climate, of under-investment in education, including ASN, is having an impact across the whole learning population, and is detrimental to the wellbeing of the teaching workforce, the wellbeing of young people, and the educational experience for many young people.^{xxi}

Detriment to teachers' own health and wellbeing

Teachers have reported reduced morale, owing to a feeling of failing young people and their families; a feeling of their efforts being futile; feeling blamed for repetitive unacceptable pupil behaviour; feeling unsupported by management/local authority; and having ongoing concern for vulnerable children. They have also reported increased stress and risk of personal injury or other health impacts, because of exposure to violent incidents, personal abuse or aggression, from learners who require more support but are not getting it, and their parents.

Overall, teachers are telling us that the current ASN climate is leading to reduced wellbeing both at and outside of work – citing, for example, lack of sleep, headaches, generalised anxiety – all of which potentially contribute to more long-term absence. They also report frustration caused by the lack of opportunities to undertake relevant professional learning.

Detriment to young people's wellbeing

There are multiple health and wellbeing impacts being reported for learners, including those learners who have additional support needs and those who don't. Learners who have additional support needs can experience reduced morale, due to receiving less support to have their needs met than is required:

- being in larger class size(s) than is optimal;
- being less supported to take part in enrichment/after-school activities than is required;
- lower self-esteem caused by all of the above;
- higher levels of generalised anxiety; being more likely to display challenging behaviour;
- being involved in more violent incidents, fights and low-level disruption to learning and;
- experiencing a loss of dignity e.g. when they exhibit high levels of distress (“a meltdown”).

Among the general pupil population, learners can experience higher levels of anxiety due to more stressful atmospheres developing when children do not receive the requisite support; stress caused by disrupted learning, e.g. when a classroom has to be evacuated due to a violent incident; potential distress caused by witnessing peers' violent behaviour; and overall, reduced enjoyment of school.

Detriment to young people's educational experiences

Teachers have reported that the current climate, of under-investment in ASN, is having an impact across the whole learning population. They have shared concerns about:

- Some pupils being unable to access learning due to social/emotional issues;
- Less access to learning support for some pupils, as this is diverted to supporting the most complex and severe needs, e.g. less support for children with dyslexia;

- Some pupils having longer waits for work to be marked or new work set;
- Some pupils having fewer positive interactions with Senior Management Teams or other teachers who are dealing with large numbers of acute cases/crises;
- Some pupils receiving less attention from teachers;
- Risk of reduced attainment, due to increasing non-attendance, opting out of school, disruption of learning or less time with teachers;
- Differential impacts depending on socio-economic status: children from higher income families often getting more support than those from poorer backgrounds, as a result of more strident parental advocacy;
- Less support available at transition times;
- Less exposure to demonstrations, discussions, etc. as these are curtailed when teaching is adapted to suit the needs of pupils whose difficulties, from being inadequately supported, have the potential to disrupt learning.

The EIS Statutory Ballot in Pursuit of the Workload Dispute

The EIS workload consultative ballot result added pressure on both the Scottish Government and COSLA to deliver their agreement to reduce weekly class contact. However, with a lack of meaningful progress, **a statutory ballot, opened on 12th November 2025 and closes on 14th January, 2026.**

It is a two-question ballot with both strike action, and action short of strike (ASOS) options being presented to members to put pressure on the Scottish government to deliver its promise to reduce weekly class contact.

Teacher workload is exacerbated by the lack of ASN professionals and resources. The amount of time required to tailor teaching for large numbers of pupils with ASN in teachers' classes is unsustainable. Unmet ASN needs can lead to ASN-related pupil behaviour issues that then affect all pupils within classes. The time then taken to deal with violent and aggressive incidents takes away teaching time and time outside of teaching time that could be spent on 'preparation and correction'.

The EIS is clear that workload is at an unsustainable level for the teacher workforce and that the implementation of the reduction in weekly class contact is a crucial first step with gains for all teachers. In effect, the existing workload will be distributed amongst more teachers – and these gains will specifically improve outcomes for pupils with ASN.

We cannot continue with the chronic under-funding of the mainstreaming agenda which sees pupils being failed within our system, and teachers being pushed to breaking point trying to fill in the gap between political promises and scant on-the-ground resourcing. This is not simply the view of the EIS – please read the Joint ASN Statement in the appendix.

End Notes

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- ⁱ UK Legislation, “Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004” <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/4/contents>
- ⁱⁱ EIS, “ASL in Scottish school education: Exploring the gap between promise & practice.” (May 2019) <https://www.eis.org.uk/additional-support-needs/asnguidance>
- ⁱⁱⁱ EIS, “Stand Up for Quality Education: Parliamentary Briefing” (March 2024) <https://www.eis.org.uk/stand-up-for-quality-education/parliamentbriefing>
- ^{iv} EIS, “Campaign Briefing: ASN Resourcing” (January 2024) <https://www.eis.org.uk/additional-support-needs/asnresourcing>
- ^v EIS, “EIS 2023 Member Survey: Workload, Health and Wellbeing, and The Cost of Living Crisis” (April 2023) <https://www.eis.org.uk/Content/images/Research/2023MemberSurvey.pdf>
- ^{vi} EIS, “ASL in Scottish school education: Exploring the gap between promise & practice.” (May 2019) <https://www.eis.org.uk/additional-support-needs/asnguidance>
- ^{vii} Scottish Government, “Pupil and teacher characteristics 2025” (December 2025) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-and-teacher-characteristics-2025/>
- ^{viii} EIS, “Joint Media Statement - Additional Support Needs in Scotland's Schools” (June 2024) <https://www.eis.org.uk/additional-support-needs/jointstatement>
- ^{ix} Ibid.
- ^x Scottish Government, “Education: agreement with COSLA: Joint statement following an agreement on education funding and provision” (December 2024) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-agreement-with-cosla/>
- ^{xi} Ibid.
- ^{xii} Scottish Government, “Pupil census supplementary statistics 2024” Table 1.5: Pupils with Additional Support Needs and integration into mainstream classes by sector 2007-2024 (March 2025) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/>
- ^{xiii} Scottish Government, “Pupil and teacher characteristics 2025” (December 2025) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-and-teacher-characteristics-2025/>
- ^{xiv} Scottish Government, “Pupil census supplementary statistics 2024” Table 1.5: Pupils with Additional Support Needs and integration into mainstream classes by sector 2007-2024 (March 2025) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/>
- ^{xv} Scottish Government, “Pupil census supplementary statistics 2025” Table 1.8a: Reasons for support for pupils with Additional Support Needs, by sex, Pupil Numbers 2024 (December 2025)
- ^{xvi} Scottish Government, “Pupil census supplementary statistics 2025” Table 1.5a: All sectors, pupils with Additional Support Needs and integration into mainstream classes, 2007-2025 (December 2025) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/>
- ^{xvii} Scottish Government, “Pupil and teacher characteristics 2025” (December 2025) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-and-teacher-characteristics-2025/>
- ^{xviii} Scottish Government, “Teacher census supplementary statistics 2024” Table 6.7 Additional support needs teachers in all sectors by local authority, 2010-2024 (March 2025) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/teacher-census-supplementary-statistics/>
- ^{xix} Data extracted from Scottish Government, “Teacher census supplementary statistics 2024” Tables 6.7 and Additional support needs teachers in all sectors by local authority, 2010-2024 (March 2025) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/teacher-census-supplementary-statistics/> and the Scottish Government, “Pupil census supplementary statistics 2024” Table 1.5: Pupils with Additional Support Needs and integration into mainstream classes by sector 2007-2024 (March 2025) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/>
- ^{xx} Scottish Government, “Pupil census supplementary statistics 2025” Table 1.8a: Reasons for support for pupils with Additional Support Needs, by sex, Pupil Numbers 2024 (December 2025) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/>
- ^{xxi} EIS, “ASL in Scottish school education: Exploring the gap between promise & practice.” (May 2019) <https://www.eis.org.uk/additional-support-needs/asnguidance>

Joint Statement on Additional Support Needs (ASN)

We support the Scottish Government's commitment to 'getting it right for every child' to provide all children, young people and their families with the right support at the right time; so that every child and young person in Scotland can reach their full potential.

The [Education \(ASL\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#) places various duties on education authorities related to the provision of school education for children and young people with additional support needs belonging to their area. Education authorities must:

- make adequate and efficient provision for the additional support required for each child or young person with additional support needs for whose school education they are responsible;
- make arrangements to identify additional support needs;
- keep under consideration the additional support needs identified and the adequacy of support provided to meet the needs of each child or young person.

We, the undersigned, record our concern that the proportion of Scotland's pupils with an identified Additional Support Need (ASN) has risen from 6.5% in 2009 to 37% in 2023 without a corresponding increase in resources to support this level of need.

We have seen the level and complexity of additional support needs grow, whilst poverty continues to extend its crippling grip across families in Scotland, intensifying in the midst of the cost-of-living crisis, with hunger, fuel

and digital poverty now impacting more than one in three children in some areas.

We believe that the Scottish Government has not provided sufficient funding to allow local authorities to make adequate and efficient provision for the additional support required for each child or young person with additional support needs.

The current climate of under-investment in Additional Support for Learning is now having an impact across the whole learning population and is detrimental to the wellbeing of children and young people; the wellbeing of school staff; and the educational experience for many pupils.

The final report of the National Discussion on Education highlighted the imperative for ‘adequate sustained funding to provide staffing and specialist resources to be able to achieve the commitment to inclusivity and [meet] the needs of each learner, with a particular urgency for children and young people identified as having Additional Support Needs’. Yet we continue to witness efforts to evade discourse around the crucial issue of resourcing.

The Scottish Government and education authorities must face up to the challenge and invest in Scottish Education to deliver the promises of inclusive practice made to young people and their families twenty years ago and which continues to be framed in current legislation.

We call on the Scottish Government and all education authorities to put in place the requisite additional staffing and resources to fully implement the relevant legal duties and commitments in practice for all pupils with additional support needs, and in so doing, improve the quality of education provision and wellbeing for those children and young people, and improve the working conditions, health, safety and wellbeing of the teachers and support staff who work with them.

Co-signatories of the Joint Statement on ASN

AHDS	Greg Dempster, General Secretary
Connect	Gavin Yates, Executive Director
EIS	Andrea Bradley, General Secretary
Glasgow City Parents Group	Leanne McGuire, Chairperson
GMB	Keir Greenaway, Scotland senior organiser in public services
NASUWT	Mike Corbett, NASUWT Scotland Official
NPFS	Cheryl Burnett, Chair, NPFS
SLS	Graham Hutton, General Secretary
SSTA	Seamus Searson, General Secretary
UNISON	Lilian Macer, Scotland Regional Secretary
UNITE	Graham McNab, Lead Officer, Local Authorities

Addendum: Also signed by Community - Archie Glen